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ABSTRACT

A three-year curriculum of "Compact Courses" which was introduced in a secondary school in England is described here. The objectives of each course are terminal; the courses have no fixed length or pattern. The method adopted is that best suited to the teacher in view of the terminal objective. During the first 2 years, students take eight separate 10-week courses in different languages and in various aspects of language, linguistics, and culture. The content for French, Spanish, German, and Italian in the first and second years follows a notional-functional syllabus. In addition to these courses, the students also must take courses in civilization in which they are encouraged to broaden their own interests. The third component is linguistics in which students make explicit their implicit knowledge of English and study the relationships between Indo-European languages at the structural and lexical levels. The third year consists of a one-year Compact Course in French. In this year classes rotate among four teachers, a week at a time. The content of this course is described and a brief description is given of the fourth and fifth year classes that follow a more traditional framework. (AMH)

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The Compact Course: A Curricular Innovation

David Cross Ph.D.

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David Cross

The Structure and Content in Practice

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

What I have learned about Compact Courses is practical, not theoretical and academic. Whilst the models I offer you were born of experience in teaching European languages to English children, much of both the experience and the resulting course content and methodology will be transferable to colleagues teaching other languages in other, more hospitable, climates. What I say today about the study of Spanish or German in England is, hopefully, applicable to the study in Africa, of other African languages and of English or French as the main foreign language.

What is of real relevance and value to teachers in any continent, is the economy made by the introduction of Compact Courses. I trust that you will all appreciate the ease with which the notion of Compact Courses can be introduced into Education at all levels - and possibly in all subjects. You will certainly appreciate the resulting diminution of work-load and teacher-strain. Your employers will appreciate the fact that costs may be lowered by the implementation of a scheme like the one to be described. In my own school we have voluntarily cut our departmental allowance by a half since we introduced a pattern of successive Compact Courses.

I would like to offer my own definition of Compact Courses, as they are taught in my school.

1) Compact Courses have terminal objectives. These aims are explained to the learner in advance. Whilst a Compact Course may be designed to be built onto the foundations of an earlier course or courses, each Compact Course has 'surrender value'.

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The Structure and Content in Practice

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1) Compact Courses have terminal objectives. These aims are explained to the learner in advance. Whilst a Compact Course may be designed to be built onto the foundations of an earlier course or courses, each Compact Course has 'surrender value'.

2) Compact Courses have no fixed length. They may last days, weeks, even one or two years.

3) They have no fixed pattern. They may be extensive (perhaps one or two lessons a week), semi-intensive (perhaps 3 or 4 hours a week) or intensive (one whole day each week, a whole weekend, an entire week).

4) There is no god-given method. The method adopted is the method best suited to the teacher in view of the terminal objective and the teacher's own personality, pedagogical belief and expertise.

Apologia

It was once said of an historian's lecture that it was so boring that even his fellow historians noticed!

I shall not lecture. The style of this address will necessarily be personal and narrative rather than academic. Nor am I able to go straight to the point. This is because the introduction of a series of Compact Courses into my own school, to replace the usual monolithic French course, can only be clearly understood in terms of my own pre-teaching background, my beliefs and my initial experiences as a teacher of French in London.

Leaving school with only a few O-levels I earned my living in a variety of ways. I became a bank-clerk, a soldier, a musician, a store manager, a street trader and - most important of all, because it changed my life so much - a Tour Manager. I spent ten years conducting tourists around Europe; indeed, around much of the world. In doing so I had to expand a school-boy level of French into a communicative command of quite a lot of languages. I worked for a director whose expectations in terms of language-learning were high. He would expect me to gain a level of competence in a new language in a matter

of days, rather than weeks. I needed to learn only enough of the language to handle the needs of my tourists. As a result I quickly learned to define my own syllabus - rejecting a cumulative study of the grammar in favour of acquisition of essential vocabulary and structure. I had not heard of a notional-functional grammar, but that is more or less the analysis which I adopted; I defined my linguistic needs in terms of the transactional situations in which I would find myself and what I would need to do, or get done, through the language. Never did I need to write. Language use was restricted to either face to face or telephone contacts. In short I learned to learn languages quickly, for the purpose of transmission of messages.

I was in my thirties when I began to study again. As well as gaining a first degree I had to support my family, working in streets and markets when I was not at college, taking tours during the vacations. At the age of thirty-seven I became a teacher. I was ready, I thought, to teach a language.

It would be difficult to describe the deep shock I experienced. Ill-motivated, ill-mannered youths made my life, and that of my colleagues, a misery. Around me, in London, I could see a similar situation. Despite my own discomfort I did feel a measure of sympathy for those hostile adolescents. I felt that we deserved their overt dislike of our subject. Their poor behaviour resulted, I was sure, from the pupils' own assessment of the value of the exercise. It was apparent to them that French - as it was being taught - had very little connection with their own lives, then or in the future. There was an obsession with the written word, with texts artificially contrived to demonstrate a point of grammar. Graduation was based upon course-writers' notions of what is simple and what is difficult; notions which are both subjective and psycholinguistically unsound. There was an over-emphasis upon accuracy, upon form rather than upon the message. Language learning was a slow and painful process.

My own experience as a language user had taught me that language learning need not be slow; that languages were easily learned for purposes of communication. What is more I was convinced that 'fluency' was also the key to accuracy in writing, that if we could teach pupils to speak easily it would be possible to transfer this skill to eventual written accuracy. Very obviously an obsessive pre-occupation with written accuracy was not effecting a transfer to oral fluency.

I could not believe the wastage. So much effort and pain on the part of both teachers and learners resulted in a pitiful level of language competence. The majority of pupils abandoned French at the end of the three compulsory years, not only inept, but - even worse - convinced of their own inability to learn another language. Those who continued were groomed for public examinations. Even these pupils were virtually incompetent at the end of the five years. The successful O-level candidate (and remember that we are talking here about a tiny minority of pupils) was - and still is - incapable of reading a newspaper, listening to the radio or engaging in any form of meaningful language exchange. Hence the myth, that the English are in some way biologically unfitted for language learning.

I became convinced that the very organisation of language teaching was as much to blame as the content. The timetable creates failures. The timetable implies that five years are necessary if one wishes to learn even a related language. The compulsory three years become a 'weeding-out' time; expectations are impossibly low. The following two years seem to set standards of written accuracy which are impossibly high.

An Alternative to Strife

Faced with what I felt to be an alarming and wasteful situation, I set about designing alternative schemes. Eventually the position of Head of Modern Languages was advertised at my present school, The Archbishop Michael Ramsey School, in the Inner London Education Authority. The scheme

described here is the scheme which I presented to the Headmaster and governors. This scheme was accepted by them as valid, getting me my present position. This scheme has, by now, been in successful use for six years.

It is based upon my own experience of language learning, following closely the pattern of my own language acquisition. My pupils now sample a succession of languages, with a survival emphasis, gradually increasing in intensity. A near immersion programme is made available to the motivated students at a time when extrinsic motivation (in my case it was money, in their case it is examinations and qualifications) encourages diligence.

The first two years are seen as a Foundation Course, preparing the youngsters for insightful and efficient language learning in the following years, or even after school. The separate components of the Foundation Course, which I shall shortly describe, repeatedly bring to all of us language teachers fresh classes of enthusiastic beginners. The main foreign language - which happens to be French - is begun only at entry to the third year. At the end of that year the disillusioned may opt out of languages altogether. The motivated students choose to continue the study of a language. In creating this pattern of successive Compact Courses we have eradicated all of the problems of hostility and poor behaviour. Our own internal certificates, available during the third year, allow those who choose to abandon languages to leave us with dignity, with a proven level of competence in several languages. They do not perceive themselves as failures.

Before getting to the real point of the address - the Structure and Content of Compact Courses - may I give you some reassurances? I am able to do this because the products of the multi-lingual course have surpassed all our expectations. Deficiencies which we expected to find in the main language did not materialise.

1) Pupils making a delayed start on the main foreign language, on the basis of a multi-lingual Foundation Course, do not begin the post-option

course disadvantaged. Research has shown such pupils, after only one year of French, to be stronger in all skills than pupils - following both a textbook course and a multi-media course - in a Matched Control School. (1)

2) The accent of the delayed start pupils is superior to that of the French from the age of eleven pupils, even where the delayed-start pupils were taught by the same teachers as the early-start pupils.

3) It is possible to meet the same end of school examination levels in the main language with the same degree of success. In my own school the results achieved by the early-start and the delayed-start pupils show no real differences.

May I also enumerate some of the advantages which we expected, and have obtained, in offering multi-lingualism through Compact Courses, in place of the 'drip-feed' study of a single language.

1) Teachers have to define their syllabus much more carefully. With less time available both aims and content must be clearly defined.

2) Teachers teach their compact course several times in a year, improving presentation and expertise as they do so.

3) Minority languages are preserved and sampled by all pupils before the moment of option.

4) Teacher movement is rendered quite harmless. A new teacher either adopts a previous Compact Course or writes his own. New languages can be introduced, a language replaced, at any time. No pupil loses his teacher - all of the teachers teach all of the pupils.

5) Pupils can join the school at almost any time and begin language learning in an ab-initio programme.

6) More pupils than ever before are choosing to continue a language in years four and five.

7) Teacher expectations and pace are higher, with limited time available.

8) Students approach the main foreign language as comparatively mature individuals, having learned learning strategies, knowing the ethos

of the language department, possessing concepts which eleven year olds have yet to acquire.

9) All pupils experience success. Most gain terminal certificates for the early languages. If they choose to leave us they leave us confident in their own ability to learn a language, and able to move round Europe with a degree of competence in the major languages.

10) Language continuers, in addition to their examination success in the language continued, have some degree of competence in other, unexamined languages and an awareness of 'language' which may aid later language learning.

In describing the structure and content of the multi-lingual course in my own school, I do not do so in the conceited belief that this is necessarily the best model. Nor is it inevitably a model which is ubiquitous. It is, however, the model which allows me to maximize the resources I have available, in terms of teachers competent to teach the respective languages, and to give to all of the students the elements which we feel are necessary as a prelude to the more intensive study of a language, or languages, at the post-option level.

In addition to introducing the learner to samples of language learning, which increase in length and intensity we want to give him the ancillaries of language learning. Ancillaries which are normally by-products of the monolithic course. That is to say, an understanding of the target culture (I would deny that the five-year course imparts an empathy for that culture), and an insight into grammatical concepts which do not exist in the mother tongue. In order to avoid duplication of teaching and confusion of syllabus, these extraneous elements are taken out of the earlier language course and taught as separate courses, in the mother tongue.

So, there are three major components in our language programme: foreign languages, civilization and sensitivity to language. I shall outline the content of these components after having described the structure of the ensemble.

The Structure

The structure is quickly outlined. The school has an eight-form entry. During the first three years these forms come to us in two blocks of four classes. I have only one teacher able to teach Spanish or Italian. Two teachers can teach German. All teachers can teach French. Inevitably all teachers can also teach aspects of civilization and language-study, the two extraneous components of the Foundation Course.

The academic year is forty weeks long. As I have said, four classes are sent to the languages department as a block. The obvious pattern to adopt, during the first two years, was one of four, separate, ten-week Compact Courses. The third year is a one-year Compact Course in French, but, as you will see, even this has been organised to share out the expertise of my teachers and to reduce preparation load.

Pupils opt in or out of languages at the end of the third year. French and German are available at this level. In the sixth form, as well as continuing the study of these languages to higher levels, we can offer ab-initio courses in German, Italian and Spanish. The overall structure can best be seen in the form of a table:

Structure of Language Courses

<u>Year</u>	<u>Compact Courses</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1	a) Spanish or Italian	10 weeks
	b) Linguistics	10 weeks
	c) Civilization, level one	10 weeks
	d) Civilization, level two	10 weeks
2	a) German, level one	10 weeks
	b) German, level two	10 weeks
	c) Linguistics	10 weeks
	d) Civilization	10 weeks

3	French	one year
4/5	French and/or German	two years
6)	French/German continued	one/two years
7)	Ab-initio Spanish Italian German	one year

During the first two years the mixed ability classes take the successive Compact Courses in any order. Each teacher teaches his course to every one of the classes during the year. In the third year the system of rotation is continued, with each French teacher preparing specific topics. The mixed ability classes continue to move from teacher to teacher, but now they stay with each teacher for only one week. In this way the major, one-year Compact Course is transformed into a series of 'Mini-Compact Courses', each topic being linguistically self-contained and with a terminal objective. In subsequent years we adopt a team-teaching approach, putting two groups together, where possible, and assigning the native assistant to the classes to reduce pupil-teacher ratio.

The Content

Year 1

a) First Foreign Language

It should be remembered that Spain and Italy (one of these languages only is met) both attract more British holiday-makers than any other European country. Accordingly we chose four areas of possible interaction and defined the content for those four specific topics in terms of a Notional-Functional analysis.

Specific Topic IPolite Greetings

<u>Function</u>	-	Phatic
<u>Notions</u>	-	None
<u>Lexis</u>	-	Good-day, please, thank you, how are you, well, yes, n

Specific Topic IIShopping

<u>Functions</u>	-	Volition: I'd like.... please What would you like? May I help you?
	-	Enquiry: How much is - have you?
<u>Notion</u>	-	Number: Price, Marks, Pesetas, etc. Numbers to infinity
	-	Quantity: Kilo, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{10}$ Litre, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$
	-	Package: Bottle, Packet, Tin, Can
	-	Gesture: That!
<u>Lexis</u>	-	Beer, lemonade, milk, tea, coffee, bread, butter, cheese, meat, fish, sugar.

(to this list are added items readily learnable by the learner, e.g.
in Italian, spaghetti, crema, sigarette).

Specific Topic III

Directions

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| <u>Function</u> | - | Enquiring: Where is.....?
Which way to.....?
How far to? |
| <u>Notions</u> | - | Spatial: Distance, metres, kilometers
Direction, left, right, straight on |
| | - | Ordinal: First - Fifth |
| <u>Lexis</u> | - | Turn, Continue, Cross over, near, far,
Police station, Shopping centre, Port, Railway/Bus
Station, Market place, Tourist Office. |

(Plus cognates and specialized local vocabulary such as: banco,
and Plaza de Toros in Spanish).

Specific Topic IV

Café, Restaurant

- | | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| <u>Functions</u> | - | Volition: As learned |
| | - | Enquiring: As learned, plus What is that? |
| <u>Notions</u> | - | Number: Prices |
| | - | Quantity: Size |
| <u>Lexis</u> | - | Cup, glass, bottle, carafe, large, small, water,
wine, lemon, lemonade, cream, sandwich, menu,
the bill, service inc, excellent. |

(Plus shopping cognates and well-known specialities: e.g. patate fritte,
insalata, lasagna etc. in Italian)

Space does not allow full description of the method adopted by
the teacher of this first language. Suffice to say that with behavioural
objectives role-play is an essential ingredient.

b) First Year Background Studies

The two teachers of this two-level component work as a team, taking a double class at a time. The children do not take these two levels consecutively, they spend ten weeks with these teachers, move to another ten-week course and then return for the second level.

Level One: Areas Examined

Europe generally, main features

Language frontiers

Language shift

Bilingualism

Countries and main cities

c) Level Two: Areas Examined

The Common Market

Members and languages

Language problems

Countries of the world which speak or understand the languages learned in the school.

The two teachers take turns in giving a presentation of one of these topics, using O.H.P., maps and worksheets. The final test is confined to these teacher-centred areas. Such presentations occupy approximately half of the available time.

The remainder of the time is spent in individual or small group work. Pupils are able to make project folders in which they either choose topics from a list given by the teacher (e.g. a comparison of education, food and drink, etc. in various countries) or work on a topic of a particular, individual interest. The topic work is assessable, carrying half of the marks to be gained during each course.

d) First Year Language Study

This ten-week course introduces our linguistically naive pupils to the study of language per se. The focus is upon English, the mother tongue, or

second language, of all of the pupils in our multi-racial school. The aim is to make the children aware of this uniquely human attribute. What is language? What is the effect of language deprivation on babies? How does speech develop in children? What is accent? Dialect? Register?

Most of our pupils have younger brothers, sisters, or relatives. All of them are skilled dialect users, and we have many dialects of English in the school. Some are bi-dialectal. Others are bi-lingual. We bring them to consider different varieties of English and to re-consider their own language prejudices. Finally we bring them to a perception of the order of words in English, to an awareness of structure in giving a meaning to language.

Year 2

a) Second Foreign Language: Level One

This Compact Course - in German - follows exactly the syllabus as does the first year foreign language course. In fact many more cognates are available in German than in a Romance language and so the teacher is able to make far more vocabulary available to the pupils, at levels of both recognition (aural and visual) and production.

b) Second Foreign Language: Level Two

There is a ten-week gap between the two levels, during which the class goes to a non-foreign language course. This tactic prevents the pupils from reaching a stage of boredom. It also enables us to send each class onto the other teacher of German for the second level, ensuring that all classes have an equal exposure to the language and pedagogic expertise of the teachers. The German teachers have to consolidate the level one content, adding alternative structure and new registers, if they wish. Two new topic areas are added to complete the second level:

Specific Topic V

Hotel

Functions

- Volition: As learned
 - + May I have...?
- Enquiry: As learned
 - + Is there a...?
 - Is x included?
 - On which floor is...?
 - How many...?
- Giving information: There are x persons.
 - It's for x nights.
 - My name is x.
- Approving: That's good/alright

Notions

- Number: As learned
- Ordinal: As learned
- Spatial: As learned
 - + over there
 - nth floor.

Lexis

- Days, room, double, single bed, shower, bath, balcony, w.c., lift, key, luggage, porter, reception, bar, pool, telephone, television, full, vacant, hot, cold, days, months, beach, plus cognates + requested vocab.
-

Specific Topic VI

Self

Function

- Exchanging information: I am...
 - Are you...?
 - I have
 - Have you...?
 - I live...?
 - Live you...?

My x is....

What is your x?

<u>Notions</u>	-	Age
	-	Appearance
	-	Relationships
<u>Lexis</u>	-	House, flat, London, name, nationality, telephone no., family, father, mother etc. years, plus requested vocab, e.g. professions, birthday, pets etc.

c) Second Year Background Studies

French and German are the languages immediately available in the following years. The teacher sets out to give the pupils a 'feel' of their civilisation. In addition to set lectures, pupils are encouraged to widen their own interests, developing projects upon, for example, Austria or French-speaking West Africa. End of unit tests are restricted to the teacher-led topics:

- 1) Main regions of Germany and France
- 2) Food and drink
- 3) School and education

Most lessons start with a set lecture. Pupils then continue with project-work but the rhythm is broken by activities of this nature:

- 1) A talk by the French or German assistant.
- 2) A visit to the Swiss centre in London, the German Food Centre, the Imperial War Museum (Visiting student teachers would be used for visits).
- 3) A film or video about the countries.
- 4) Preparation, in class or in the Domestic Science block, of food typical of the country. Breakfasts are particularly easy and enjoyable.

d) Second Year Linguistics (2)

The aims of this ten-week course are:

- 1) To give the pupils a basis for insightful language learning.
- 2) To make the children realise the complexity of English for foreign speakers.
- 3) To give the children a metalanguage, to equip them with the vocabulary of traditional language description and learning.
- 4) To reward, and enhance the prestige of immigrant languages in the school.
- 5) To make the pupils realize that possession of grammatical sensitivity can be a key to rapid language learning, in school, self-learn and real-life (as opposed to school) situations.

Through steered discovery the pupils make explicit their implicit knowledge of the regularities and irregularities of English. Whilst no research evidence yet suggests that explicit knowledge of the rules of language aids spontaneous performance, it is undeniable that explicit knowledge (with its editorial and monitoring function) is an aid to succeeding in public examinations as they are presently structured.

Areas Examined:

- 1) Relationships between Indo-European languages, at the structured and lexical levels.
- 2) Contrasts between English and the target languages of the school at the level of structure.
- 3) Grammatical concepts non-existent in English but critical in target languages. (e.g. gender-system, pronoun + verb form, adjectival agreement).
- 4) Tense. Influence of tense upon verb form.

Time does not allow a description of the method. Pupils of this age cannot acquire a realization of such complex content through listening to the teacher. The lessons involve a lot of pupil movement as

children line up with word cards, refer to wall-charts or dictionaries, fill in grids, or analyse samples of foreign languages totally unknown to them and to the teacher.

In the last lesson of the course the Linguistics are applied. The speaker of any immigrant language will win £10 if the teacher cannot, after only 15 minutes, summarize the main grammatical features of this language and create a new utterance which the informant will perceive as correct. During the quarter of an hour the informant uses only the immigrant language, which is unknown to the teacher. His responses to various stimuli are written in phonetic script on the blackboard. Obviously responses are elicited which enable the teacher to perceive 'markers' for plurality in nouns and verbs, gender categories, adjectival change and word order. Having sorted out such grammatical features it is simple for both pupils and teachers to describe those rules and to create one or more novel utterances(3).

Year 3

This is the final year for many of our students, who can opt out of languages at the end of the year. In addition to meeting their needs, we must also cater for those who will continue. Mixed ability classes, too, influence our syllabus.

All pupils follow a one-year Compact Course in French, the main foreign language of the school. The model offered here may not be applicable to the study of English in Africa. With France only an hour or two distant from our own shores we can start with the assumption that a transactional syllabus is valid. Students of English as a second language will not necessarily have the same aims. The written, standard form of English will be more important in Africa. The domains of possible interaction will be different. I could not pretend to have the competence to define either the domains or the content of an English

for Specific Purposes Course.

I would - even so - suggest that the analysis and approach could be generalisable.

- 1) Define areas of contact.
- 2) Decide the language functions and notions necessary for production or recognition.
- 3) Decide the vocabulary, for production or recognition.
- 4) Make each domain (specific topic) self-sufficient linguistically, to offer a succession of fresh-starts, if possible.
- 5) Give the opportunity for the more academic student to perceive systems.
- 6) Explain the aims and content of each domain to the learners as an introduction to that module.
- 7) Build in a chance for extensive (fluent) reading and listening, together with ample opportunity to create speech.
- 8) Do not inhibit the students by an obsession with accuracy.
- 9) Teach as a team if possible, to reduce teacher preparation and to offer a variety of approaches.
- 10) Incorporate role-play and role creation, dialogues and small group work.

We are fortunate in that the pupils are sent to our department in blocks of four classes at a time. With four teachers assigned to the block, I am able to rotate the classes so that each class spends one week with each teacher in turn. They come to us for three lessons, of seventy minutes duration, each week. With such a pattern a teacher prepares his three-lesson module and teaches it eight times in the month (there are two blocks). As a result preparation is careful and presentation is of a very high standard. This alone is motivating - well planned and well presented lessons are both eye- and ear-catching.

Africa, I am sure that colleagues will take an interest in the course content which I shall describe briefly.

The Pattern of the One Year Course

For the first four weeks only, each class stays with just one teacher. This teacher then assumes the monitorial role for that class for the year, collecting reports from the other teachers once the rotation starts, keeping the master register for that class, bringing any difficult pupils to the attention of the whole department or to that of the Year-Head. He also writes the reports upon the members of that class, after consultation with the rest of the team.

From this point onwards rotation starts. Each module shown is a Mini-Compact Course. Being linguistically complete it offers us a chance to cope with absences or slow-learners. The four modules shown for each month are, necessarily, taken in any order. Reference to the detailed syllabus for the year allows all four teachers to reinforce and extend language taught by colleagues. Less able pupils satisfy a language requirement with a single utterance for each function. More able children learn to make an appropriate choice of utterance from an ever increasing range of options for each function.

The Content

Month 1. Basic Survival. Numbers, prices, greetings, packaging, directions.

Month 2. 1) Cognates. French is related to English. Thousands of words exist which are similar in form and meaning. This module introduces pupils to several hundred useful cognates. They practice prosodic features of the language as well as learning to recognize, aurally, new cognates (4)

family. They need to know how to express an opinion, to accept or refuse gracefully, to make polite requests, to compliment.

4) Camping and Holidays. The 'travel' teacher continues this theme into a fourth month.

By the end of these sixteen weeks it is almost Christmas. At this stage we give tests for our own 'Interpreter's Certificate, Level One'. Each of the four teachers is responsible for designing tests of Listening, Speaking and Reading for the modules he has taught. Analysis of the results enable us to amend syllabuses of modules which have been badly taught or - alternatively - redesign a poor test. We 'fix' the pass-level so that as many pupils as possible will gain a certificate and keep trying for the remainder of the year.

Month 5.

1) The News. The same approach is continued but a great deal of extensive reading matter in current affairs is brought in (9).

2) Diaries. The past tense is introduced. No attempt is made to make artificial divisions, transitive and intransitive verbs, regular and irregular verbs, are introduced at the same time.

3) Weather. The language of the radio and newspaper weather-forecast is learned to a level of recognition.

4) Travel. Every possible preposition is introduced - together with maps of towns, streets and department stores. New vocabulary is added. Role play is again evident in this module.

Month 6.

1. The News. Increasingly the attention of the pupils is drawn to structural and grammatical features of the texts, using French meta-language to point out gender, number, agreements and verb forms. This

module builds upon the Linguistics Course of the second year as well as indicating teaching strategies that pupils will meet at higher levels.

2. Diaries. These are continued and extended. Writing forms a meaningful component of this module, allowing self-expression.

3. School. Pupils are taught a vocabulary which will enable them to talk about their own school-life and to understand a French pupil talking on the same theme. The teacher can capitalise on the pupils' ability to use and recognise a range of tenses. Letters and tapes from a French school provide the realia of this topic.

4. Towns and Regions. The 'travel expert' builds upon the second year Background Studies Course, treating each town and main region in France. Extensive reading, for information, is an integral component. Pupils copy a brief summary at the end of each presentation.

Month 7.

1) The News. Continued.

2) Diaries. Continued.

3) Asking Questions. We prize the ability to formulate questions.

One teacher brings together all the question forms taught by all four teachers to date. All the learned language functions are also re-cycled. The key component of this module is role play. Pupils are assigned roles to act out in small groups, combining learned material from the whole syllabus in new ways.

4. Paris. The travel teacher shows students how to use the transport networks of the capital, as well as describing the major monuments. Slides, extensive reading texts and maps are used.

Post-Option Courses

I fear that the fourth to fifth year language courses cannot, fairly, be described as Compact. Certainly they have become Compacted, by the demolition of the drip-feed five-year course, but the courses fail to meet my own criteria in two important ways:

1) The final objectives (examination success) have never been clearly defined, neither in behavioural or linguistic terms.

2) We do not have an agreed syllabus. A series of activities do not give a syllabus.

Very probably our successful sixth form ab-initio programmes - the one year course in German especially - do fit our criteria, being more clearly defined because of the limited amount of time. Possibly the first year of the two-year French course could also be seen as a self-contained one-year course.

Having voiced reservations I shall explain the fourth year French course (second year of French) because, I am sure, it is an example of the right way to teach a language at volunteer levels. By the end of this second year of French we are conscious of working with relaxed and fluent language users. That I am reluctant to give our fifth year model is easily explained. I feel ashamed of the teaching strategies we have to adopt in order to get the pupils through examinations which have very little to do with measuring language competence.

The Second Year of French

As always I start with my aims. They are these:

1) To give the learner a 'feel' for language, an implicit knowledge of the grammar.

2) To equip him for confrontation with native-speakers, as a fluent listener and speaker.

3) To prepare him for self-learning in later years.

4) To render the whole process enjoyable and intrinsically motivating.

5) To pass him on to the fifth year teacher equipped with an implicit knowledge of French which can now be made explicit.

To achieve these aims we have defined the course content, not a syllabus perhaps, but certainly a method: The learner must meet massive examples of the language as it is naturally spoken and written; the difference between the two forms must be understood by him. Students must be taught to read for information and pleasure, rather than for the purpose of meeting and practising specific patterns of French. Writing, in addition to consolidating what has been heard, said or read, serves as an occasional respite from very intensive work in the language. The mother-tongue, whilst not out-lawed, must be used sparingly and only where a real breakdown in communication has occurred. The mother-tongue may not be used as a vehicle for discussion of the target language. Students must be encouraged to speak creatively. Focus must be upon message rather than form. Grammar explanation is made when it becomes necessary for the learner rather than for its own sake. The order of presentation will be haphazard, not programmed. Communicative demands upon the learner will be high and continuously increased.

Content

1) The News is continued. Genuine radio news-bulletins become possible for our students within a few weeks of starting the course. Little by little our own reconstructions of the day's news become replaced with the real thing. Current affairs allow intelligent discussion, offering the chance to talk about something worthy of their interest. (6)

2) Role play Every week we either give them the ability to do something else in the language (e.g. to criticize, to complain, to suggest) or we add to the choice of registers which are already available. Roles are prescribed, or assigned, for this small group activity.

3) Role creation This is different in that there is no prescription of role, no 'recipe' to follow. The pupils are merely told to create a scenette in which - for example - someone expresses disagreement with an opinion. Both of these role activities create a need for the teacher's expertise and knowledge among the students, who are seeking for the expression which is exactly appropriate for the situation.

4) Language games In addition to French Scrabble and crosswords we have various boxed games which are played in French. Some of these we have adapted ourselves from English games. We even allow pupils to go outside the room to play French bowls!

5) Diary work is continued. It does allow students to chat, to talk about themselves to each other. Diaries of other persons allow real transposition of language.

6) Reading We keep a supply of real French books, written for French children and teenagers.

7) Excursions and visits are arranged. We try to get them all to France (or Germany) during this year. We also take them out of school, (when we have visiting student teachers to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio) to visit places of interest to them. This allows planning (future tense), active use (present tense) and follow-up (past tense).

8) Private study We keep a range of self-learn materials (7) available. This allows pupils to rectify weaknesses, follow up a special interest and to work during the occasional break or lunch-hour. This activity is motivating and we have found it to be more than worthwhile in terms of the progress made as a direct result of private study (8).

9) Homework is set regularly in this year. Not wishing to have them write (and internalise) inaccurate French, I can only ensure that they read extensive texts. They read (and acquire both syntax and vocabulary) about specific themes, such as 'Transport in France', 'The Life of a Farmer'. In all there are some thirty themes. We assess comprehension

by getting pupils to copy true statements from a selection underneath and by oral exploitation. Whenever possible the themes and vocabulary are recycled into the role-play sessions.

10) Listening Comprehension The homework is followed up, at an interval of several weeks, by a listening comprehension upon the same theme. This ensures consolidation.

Equipment

Every lesson, throughout the school, is prepared by the teacher who will teach it. We believe that teachers work more credibly when they are using their own materials. As a result we save money by not having to buy expensive course books. Because our courses are clearly defined and all lessons are re-cycled, the amount of teacher preparation is comparatively slight. It gets even lighter as the years are repeated.

We did spend some money at the setting-up stage. We bought an overhead projector for each member of department, together with one spare model. As a result a teacher can put an entire compact course on to flimsy transparencies and carry that entire course in a single wallet. On-going expenses, once the initial purchase has been made, are limited to pens, transparencies and spare lamps for the projector.

Cassette tape recorders and players are a wonderful way of bringing other voices into the room. Each teacher has one. We also keep an amplified-speaker for when we are working with bigger groups. Again the pre-recorded cassettes, which accompany a Compact Course, can be carried with the transparencies. Extra cassettes are quite cheap and re-usable.

The department ought to have at least one radio-cassette. One member of department can keep this at home to record live broadcasts in the target language. If you are fortunate enough to have a native assistant

he can quickly copy an item of current affairs on to a transparency, so that it can be read as well as heard.

Apart from those expenses all we need is cardboard (for making flash-cards and talk-cards) and exercise books. As I said in my introduction, we have cut our departmental expenses by a half as a result of the demolition of the five-year language course and its replacement with a series of Compact Courses.

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